



EXHIBIT 11
DATE 3-19-07
HB 566

TO: House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Bob Vogel, Director of Governmental Relations
Montana School Boards Association

RE: HB 566

DATE: March 19, 2007

The Montana School Boards Association and many of our members have been directly involved in after school program development because of the benefits to students, parents, and communities. HB 566 outlines some of these benefits. Providing students with a safe and drug-free environment after school hours is the first of these benefits.

There is clear evidence that after school programs improve the academic performance of students. Educators can tell you that all students can learn – they often just learn at different paces and in different ways. The more individualized attention you can give to students, the better chance they have of grasping concepts and improving comprehension. After school programs can provide this type of opportunity.

Children in after school programs are less likely to display behavior problems, are less likely to use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco, and are less likely to commit a crime or participate in other high-risk behaviors. The after school time period – between roughly 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. – is when children are three times more likely to participate in these high-risk behaviors. But they are not engaged in these behaviors if they are constructively engaged in activities provided in an after school program.

I currently Chair the Montana Afterschool Network's Steering Committee and serve on the Executive Board. I also serve on the National School Boards Association's Extended Day Learning Opportunities Advisory Committee. I also serve on the Board of Directors of the Montana Financial Education Coalition (MFEC). You can learn more about MFEC by visiting our website at www.mtmfec.org. The members of MFEC are very interested in participating in after school programs because they have curriculum developed on personal financial education that often does not find a place within the busy school day for most students. This is another example of opportunities for students that are provided by after school programs.

Let me give you a quick word on the Montana Afterschool Network (MAN). You can find their website at www.afterschool.com. A description of the MAN is on the website:

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The Montana Afterschool Network is a statewide coalition working together to increase the availability and quality of afterschool opportunities statewide. It includes licensed child care programs, school-based and school-linked programs, youth development programs, mentoring and crime/drug abuse prevention programs.

In my work with those groups, one of the key challenges for after school programs is sustainability. One of the key provisions of HB 566 found in Section 2, is the afterschool program grants. A minimum of \$375,000 per year is expected to go out to new or existing after school programs. While these grants will not, in and of themselves, sustain an after school program, they will provide much-needed assistance and provide for leverage. Many after school programs are a partnership within the community and these grants will allow programs to serve more children.

One of the aspects of this sustainability challenge is that one or more of the program staff needs to spend a significant amount of their time looking for resources to maintain or expand their program. Having the state as a partner and receiving a grant would allow the staff to concentrate on issues of quality and effectiveness of their programs.

Evaluation of Programs

Section 4 of HB 566 relates to the development of an evaluation instrument and coming up with a process for assessing the effectiveness of after school programs. This component is, again, critically important to both existing programs and communities looking at developing programs. With the budgets being tight the focus of the efforts of most programs is to serve the children and parents who participate in the programs. There is not a lot of time to take a step back from the day-to-day operations to consider how the program could be evaluated and how effectiveness could be enhanced.

HB 566 presents a good combination of financial support for after school programs and some of the technical assistance that can help the programs become more efficient and effective.

Thank you for taking the time to consider MTSBA's testimony on House Bill 566.

Attachment: MTSBA Funding Resolution

MTSBA FUNDING RESOLUTION - MAKE QUALITY EDUCATION THE PRIORITY

WHEREAS, a quality education for all the children of Montana is of highest priority to the Montana School Boards Association; and

WHEREAS, the State of Montana has made progress toward restoring constitutionality to its system of funding Montana's public schools in compliance with the State's obligations under Article X of the Montana Constitution through funding increases and amendments to law in FY06 and FY07, but has not fully complied with the terms of the relevant court orders in *Columbia Falls Elementary v. State* and has not yet complied with the provisions of HB 701.

BE IT RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

The Montana School Boards Association's Membership endorses the Montana School Boards Association's continued vigorous pursuit of the State's compliance with the terms of Article X of the Montana Constitution. The Montana School Boards Association must be a leader in ensuring that all children served in Montana's public schools are provided with access to an adequately funded basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools.

In pursuing the State's compliance with the terms of Article X of the Montana Constitution, the Montana School Boards Association's efforts should be focused on:

1. Enforcing the rights of children served in Montana's public schools as a named plaintiff in the case of *Columbia Falls Elementary v. State*, including the pursuit of enforcement of specific timelines for the state's compliance with its constitutional responsibilities; and
2. The pursuit and support of legislative and other remedies that include a focus on achieving:
 - a. Necessary changes to the current funding formula to address the current shortcomings in the formula;
 - b. Funding to empower local school districts in narrowing achievement gaps, complying with federal and state mandates and addressing the unique needs of all children served in Montana's public schools including gifted and talented students, through provision of an array of programs and services that education experts consistently report as important to improve at-risk performance, such as:
 - i. Early childhood education (e.g. full day kindergarten, lower class sizes in the primary grades);
 - ii. Before school, after school and summer programs;
 - iii. Tutoring;
 - iv. Reduction in class size and alternative learning programs for at-risk students;
 - v. Gifted and talented curriculum and programs as detailed in HB 701, in statute, and in Montana accreditation standards.
 - vi. Programs to enhance teacher professional development.
 - vii. Support funding for students who have not turned 20 by September 10th and have yet to complete the school district's graduation requirements.
 - c. An assurance of stable funding and support for implementation of Indian Education for All in Montana's public schools;
 - d. An improvement in salaries and benefits for employees of Montana's public schools with a focus on recruiting and retaining high quality educators and classified staff;
 - e. Facilities adequate to support the programs required for quality education including both operational and capital costs, and including pre-bond facility programming;
 - f. Any tax reform that may be necessary to ensure that the State has the capacity to comply with its constitutional responsibilities for K-12 public education.